

SMALL FARM ECONOMY

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pork. By the time this is ready, the men are in from the fields impatient for their dinner.

In the meantime the men have been engaged upon work of their own. The farmer rises when he hears his wife busy herself in rekindling the turf on the hearth. If there are sons, he wakes them. After that he goes to the cow barns in the haggard to inspect the cattle housed there overnight and tend to their wants in water and hay. After breakfast, if the day is fine, neither too bitterly cold nor too soakingly wet, he sallies forth into the fields to whatever work the time of the year demands. If he finds himself confined to the house, he still has plenty to do in house and haggard.

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If he and his sons go to the fields, he probably returns about eleven-thirty for the noon meal, the heavy meal of the day. Long habit calls forth his hunger and identifies it with the house. Several countrymen have remarked that they never feel hungry away from the house but are ready to eat when they get inside. The dinner unites most of the family for the first time during the day since breakfast. Only the small children of school age are absent. Their share of the meal is often saved for them until they return about four o'clock.

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As at breakfast, the men sit down together immediately, falling to the steaming plates of cabbage, bacon, and potatoes the woman sets before them. As they eat, she stands ready to refill their plates, talking with them about the morning's work and the news of the neighborhood. It is the chief time of family conversation. During the meal the woman has boiled tea and, when the men finish with their plates, she clears away and lays bread and tea before them. Sometimes there is a longer interval between tea and dinner, devoted to smoking and talk.

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As before, the women and children do not eat until the men have finished. They take their places together when the men have left or have moved off to smoke an after-dinner pipe, an indispensable part of the meal for them.

78 FAMILY AND COMMUNITY IN IRELAND

574 "put down before" the countryman who is traveling to
602 town or to the fair or who is merely making the evening
cuaire, or visit, at which the older men of the local com-

[521] munity gather round the hearth to chat and retell the old
stories of legend and folklore and discuss the news. Nig-
gardly treatment in this regard leads to disputes, as does
abuse of the privilege by the visitor. A standing joke in

[522] Luogh was the treatment given to her too-voracious rela-
tives there by a woman who exercised considerable ingenuity
in starving them out without offending them.

574 Similarly, the obligations extend to such occasions of
good fellowship and holiday as the fair day and market.

602 "Friends" treat one another at the local public houses on
● 273 meeting in town. Thus one countryman complained to the
authors that he dreaded the fair day, for he must drink up
all his profits with his "friends." Others are able to strike
a happier balance; and a religious pledge of teetotalism
likewise surmounts the difficulty.

241 The sum of the evidence presents the small farm economy
594 as a family situation in which economic effort, individual
182 and coöperative, is controlled by the social forces operative
within the family. Labor connected with agriculture is
merely one feature of a total constellation of behavior, en-
forced through obligations reciprocal in nature and main-
tained by sentiments and sanctions in a traditional setting.

584 The Inagh farmer goes on: "The speaker goes with the young man and his father that night, and they meet the father of the girl and his friends or maybe his son and son-in-law. The first drink is ●[273] called by the young man; the second by the young lady's father.

"The young lady's father asks the speaker what fortune do he want. He asks him the place of how many cows, sheep, and horses is it? He asks what makings of a garden are in it; is there plenty of water or spring wells? Is it far in from the road, or on it? What kind of house is in it, slate or thatch? Are the cabins good, are they slate or thatch? If it is too far in from the road, he won't take it. Backward places don't grow big fortunes. And he asks, too, is it near a chapel and the school, or near town?"

The Inagh countryman could pause here; he had summarized a very long and important negotiation.

583 "Well," he went on, getting to the heart of the
584 matter, "if it is a nice place, near the road, and the place of eight cows, they are sure to ask £350 fortune. Then the young lady's father offers £250. Then maybe the boy's father throws off £50. If the young lady's father still has £250 on it, the speaker divides the £50 between them. So now it's £275. Then the young man says he is not willing to marry without £300—but if she's a nice girl and a good
273 housekeeper, he'll think of it. So, there's another
584 drink by the young man, and then another by the

iii THE FAMILY AND THE LAND 75

young lady's father, and so on with every second drink till they're near drunk. The speaker gets plenty and has a good day." ⁵⁸⁴[273] ●

The farmer paused here again; for the match is developing marvellously. "All this is one day's work," he continued. "After this, they appoint a place for the young people to see one another and be introduced. The young lady takes along her friends, maybe another girl, and her brother and her father and mother. The young man takes along his friends and the speaker.

"If they suit one another, then they will appoint a day to come and see the land. If they don't, no one will reflect on anybody, but they will say he or she doesn't suit. They do not say plainly what is wrong.

"The day before the girl's people come to see the land, geese are killed, the house is whitewashed, whiskey and porter bought. The cows get a feed early so as to look good; and maybe they get an extra cow in, if they want one." He said this last slyly, for to pretend to own more stock than one really has, is an unfair trick in the bargaining.

"Then next day comes the walking of the land. The young man stays outside in the street, but he sends his best friend in to show the girl's father round, but sure the friend won't show him the bad points.

"If the girl's father likes the land he returns, and there will be eating and drinking until night comes

132 winters—all these characteristics are related to the eastward moving stream of cyclones coming off the warm North Atlantic drift. Rain is heaviest wherever mountain masses place obstacles in the path of the moisture-bearing winds, and the peninsulas of Donegal, Connemara and Kerry have from 60 to 100 inches of rain each year (Fig. 8). By contrast the east coast gets about half this amount, while the low-lying tract between Dublin and Drogheda is favoured by a fall of under 30 ins. Everywhere the mildness and the damp encourage grasses and moisture-loving plants, but too often waterlogging has caused green pastures and woodlands to deteriorate into brown bogland. The prolonged autumns, another gift of the Atlantic, are important because they give man a sporting chance of saving his harvests: the heaviest rains are delayed until November and December. Similarly the relatively dry springs (March-May) are conducive to work in field and turf-bog at that season. (Chapter 15).

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● (273) Reviewing the distribution of the chief crops and animals to-day, the following facts may be noted. Nearly one half the land devoted to crops, excluding hay, is occupied by oats and perhaps three-quarters of the yield is fed to livestock. Only in the wettest peninsulas of Connemara and Kerry does another crop (potatoes) occupy more land. It is estimated that the "consumption" of potatoes amounts to about $\frac{1}{2}$ ton per head of the population each year, but the greater part of this goes to pigs and other livestock. The greatest concentration of wheat production is in the comparatively sunny corner of Wexford, with secondary areas along the dry east coast in Cos. Dublin and Down. Recent years have witnessed an increase in wheat growing but there is still far less than in the record years of a century ago, when wheat was being exported to England. Barley, which is more intolerant of damp than wheat, is found on the well-drained soils of Co. Louth but particularly of Wexford and the sheltered valleys of the Nore, Suir and Barrow. It has declined less than wheat because of the demand of the breweries and distilleries, but the drop in the illicit making of poteen has reduced its production in many a secluded spot along the west coast.

9: Evans K-5 (ca. 1940) 1942

ER6 Rural Irish ER6

MAN'S CROPS AND ANIMALS

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Flax is virtually confined to Northern Ireland, where the bulk of it is produced on the rich soils of the Bann and the Main. Turnips and mangels are pretty widely distributed but sugar-beet is mainly grown in the valley of the Barrow. 248
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In recent years about 60 % of the surface of Ireland has been devoted to stock-raising, and when it is remembered that a large proportion of the corn and root crops also goes to feed stock it will be seen that the pastoral industries predominate. Dairy cows, an essential part of the equipment of the peasant farm, are widely distributed, but in the commercial production of butter there is a strong concentration around the foci of Cork and Limerick, where co-operative creameries are favoured by the relative ease of transport, for example in the fertile "Golden Vale." These dairying regions also stand out as beef-producing areas, for Irish cattle are dual purpose animals bred for meat as well as milk. But the best fattening lands run round the northern and eastern sides of the Central Plain, and County Meath is justly famed in this connexion. 311
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The dry limestone pastures of east Galway and hilly tracts such as the Wicklows and the Sperrins are outstanding as areas of sheep-rearing, and surprising numbers are kept on the slopes of the western mountains, the wool going to make the homespun of the Gaeltacht. Pig-breeding is heaviest in the south-west, where the dairying industry supplies skimmed milk. As a domestic animal attached to the small farms, the pig is by no means so typically Irish as is often assumed. [198]
But one often comes across empty pigsties, some of them of archaic construction (Chapter 9) which testify to their importance in the past : one minor factor in the decline is the fact that in the days of active poteen-making pigs were conveniently fed on the waste products. [273] ●

On the other hand poultry of all kinds have maintained and even increased their popularity. The old breed of hen still favoured in the west is a small black bird, active, intelligent and extremely domesticated. The potato has encouraged the keeping of poultry, and Arthur Young 235

- 262 make a long list of the plants and herbs which are gathered and dried for use as simples. In some areas, for example Tyrone and Derry, it is recorded that the cattle used to be bled in summer, "in a smooth place, each layer of coagulating blood being strewn with salt until a little mound was formed, which was cut up in squares and laid by for use as food in the scarce time of the year." In Wicklow (1780) "they bleed their horses and cows, and mix the blood with meal for food."
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262 In the days before sugar was known honey played a considerable part in domestic economy and mead or metheglin, made from honey, was once a popular beverage. We have no knowledge of the period when whiskey distillation was first practised but stills and worms of some antiquity have been found in the bogs, and it is natural to correlate the popularity of whiskey and poteen with the dampness of the climate. A fact worth recording is that until recently illicit stills were made and kept in repair by travelling tinkers in whom it is perhaps not extravagant to see shades of the skilled craftsmen of the later Bronze Age who made cauldrons out of sheet bronze (cf. Fig. 5).
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- 252 Far into the historic period heated stones were employed in cooking and it may be that memories of this old method linger on. The nearest thing I have seen is the custom of plunging a hot poker into cow's milk to "sing it" when it is given to lambs. The explanation offered was that this made its taste resemble that of sheep's milk.

BROWNE—*Ethnography of Inishbofin and Inishshark*. 345

Begging is practically unknown, and drunkenness, as a habit, does not exist, the sobriety being very noticeable on holidays, though occasional bouts of drinking are sometimes indulged in when a good take of fish has been made. They are very conscientious in their religious observances, and depend greatly on the advice and control of their clergy, with regard to temporal as well as spiritual affairs. Sexual irregularities are extremely rare, no case of illegitimacy having been recorded from the islands for years. [181] [735] [273] [793] [848]

As fishermen they are brave, hardy, and extremely venturesome; this applies especially to the men of Inishshark, who are reputed in Bofin to be the best and most daring boatmen on the west coast. [181]

Quarrels often occur, but a regular stand-up fight appears to be unknown, the men usually contenting themselves with abusive language, or at most a sudden blow or stone-throwing. A woman when angered may use very abusive language towards a man, as she would be practically safe from any fear of physical violence on his part, even when she was very provoking. [578] [181]

On the other hand, they are not without faults. In their ordinary life they are thriftless, and not too cleanly in many of their habits, and have but little regard for ordinary sanitary laws; their veracity, too, is not altogether unimpeachable, while the people of the mainland allege that they have a very strong aversion to the payment of debts, rent, and cess, for the last-named of which they owe over £1300. [515] [651]

The habits and manners of the people of Shark are much the same as those described above. The people are noted for their loyalty to one another; they never tell any stranger anything about their local affairs. They are kindly and civil to visitors, always crowding down to assist them on landing, but are said to be capable of acts of ferocity when roused. [609]

5. *Folk-names*.—The following list of fifty-one surnames comprises all those now to be met with on the islands. Some of these names, however, are those of families not long established on the islands, while others, formerly common, as Gorham and Halligan, are now without representatives. [551]

The Gorhams are still, to some extent, connected with Inishbofin, as one of them is proprietor of the only shop there worth the name, and in addition holds a farm, but he lives on the mainland, and manages them by deputy, only occasionally visiting the place himself. It is possible that, owing to the heavy emigration, other surnames may also have disappeared. In the list of surnames given in the [444]

272 every meal; it is made extremely strong, and, as elsewhere, is the cause of a good deal of dyspepsia.

● 273 Alcoholic liquors are not much drunk, as illicit distilling has altogether ceased in this district.

264 An average working day's dietary is as follows:—Breakfast: tea, and home made bread. Dinner: fish, or eggs and potatoes. Supper; the same as breakfast.

291 4. *Clothing*.—The homespun and home-dyed woollen fabrics still
177 constitute the bulk of the clothing worn, but are being superseded by imported slop clothes of inferior quality; and the dress on working days is nondescript and often ragged. On Sundays and holidays the proportion of imported clothing seen is greater, and the homespun suits are sometimes very different from the old types, being imitations in cut of the imported goods. The dress of the men consists of a shirt of thick white or chocolate-coloured homespun, with a rather high plain band collar, and large bone buttons, or, in some cases, it is made of imported flannel, purchased in Clifden or Westport. The single or double-breasted waistcoat, with the large collar-flaps buttoned back, is, when worn, generally put on inside the bawneen, or white flannel coat, instead of outside, as was formerly the case.

Trousers are of homespun or corduroy.

A thick comforter is worn about the neck by many, even in very warm weather.

For head-dress, soft felt hats and caps of various shapes, all imported, are now in general use, the old home-made flat, blue bonnet being but little worn, except by the older men. It may be most frequently seen in Westquarter and Inishshark.

291 The men wear thick worsted stockings of dyed or "natural" wool, and very stout boots of native make, as a regular part of their daily attire, but the women and children go bare-footed, except on Sundays and holidays. The dress of the women shows as great changes as that of the men; it is of the well-known Connemara type.

The head is covered by a red kerchief, or small shawl, often a plaid, but so far as seen never by a "mutch" (a cap with white frill). Over the shoulders a small red tartan shawl is folded, half hiding a jacket, or bodice, of homespun, or imported woollen stuff; the petticoat is short, and dyed a bright red with madder, and sometimes trimmed with a few rows of black braid, and a wide check apron is usually worn. Some women, on Sundays, wear the old large blue cloak with hood and double cape.

The small boys wear the kilt-like frock of white, red, or brown

114 It has been stated by one or two casual visitors that the natives of
 141 Inishkea were dwarfed and very degenerate, but this idea seems to have
 arisen from the islands having been visited at a time when most of
 the able-bodied men were away at the lobster-fishery, and only the
 immature, the old, and the ailing were at home. No man of less than
 1640 m.m. (5 ft. 4½ in.) was met with on either island, and the men
 appear to be robust and athletic, while the women are, on the whole,
 good looking.

143 The people themselves do not seem to ascribe any ill effects to the
 582 close intermarriage. It is doubtful if these unions are proportionally
 more frequent in Inishkea than on the mainland.

164 *Diseases.*—The following account is believed to be correct, though,
 as before stated, there was much difficulty in obtaining accurate
 information on this subject. Actual figures are given wherever they
 could be obtained.

The principal diseases may be classed as follows :—

[158] *Insanity.*—A considerable number of cases occur in Erris, mainly
 in the mountainous districts, comparatively few in the Mullet, and,
 all informants agreed in stating, that there have been none for many
 years from either north or south Inishkea.

● [273] The prevalence of insanity in the mountainous regions may pro-
 bably be partly due to illicit distillation, and the influences of worse
 food and inferior dwellings compared to those of the people of the coast.

732 *Idiocy and Imbecility.*—Repeated inquiries failed to find more than
 two imbeciles, one on south Inishkea, and the other in Belmullet.

164 Two members of the family in the south Inishkea case are lame; no
 history could be obtained relative to the parents.

Epilepsy is not very common, but several cases (number not ascer-
 tained) are known; none of these are in the islands.

Deaf-mutism.—There is one case of deaf-mutism in Belmullet.
 Parents were said not to be related. No cases in the peninsula or on
 the islands.

[501] *Blindness*, except among the aged, is not common. A congenitally
 blind boy was drowned in the year 1893, trying to cross in a curragh
 from one of the islands to the mainland with a cargo of poteen.

Malformations seem to be rare, two cases of hare lip were the only
 ones seen, and the inquiry failed to find any more except the two cases
 of lameness mentioned above.

164 *Fevers.*—Enteric and typhus are both common, cases of the latter
 being of frequent occurrence. Measles and scarlet fever are not very
 often met with.

BROWNE—*Ethnography of the Mullet, Inishkea, & Portacloy*. 615

mentions that at one time the people of Inishkea were much noted for it, and that the fate of the two men, who some time in the last century ruined themselves in a lawsuit about a sheep, became proverbial, and litigants were warned to remember the fate of "Malley and Malone." C. O.¹ also refers to this peculiarity, which nowadays seems to be more characteristic of the mainland people than the islanders.

In the course of the cases arising from this tendency, many curious examples of ingenious cross-swearing occur. Intoxication is rather prevalent on fair days and holidays, and at weddings and other festive occasions, but at ordinary times there is not much of it among the country people. They appear to be conscientious in their religious observances, and depend much on the guidance and advice of their clergy.

As will be judged from the extent and variety of their folk-lore, they have a great love for the supernatural and mystical.

As regards morals, though illegitimacy is by no means unknown, yet, when the size of the population is taken into account, it is so rare as to be very creditable to the moral tone of the people.²

A stand-up fight rarely occurs when men quarrel, there may be one or two blows struck, or stone-throwing may be indulged in, but disputes do not usually get beyond cursing and vituperation.

As parents they are affectionate, but careless and unequal in their treatment of their children, at one time over indulging them, and at another punishing severely for a slight fault.

With regard to industry, but little can be said in their favour, though energetic by starts, during which they are capable of a great deal of work, accounts agree in stating that they dislike steady occupation, and are indolent. It should be remembered, however, that there has hitherto been but little inducement to them to cultivate steady industry. The women seem always to have plenty of work on hand, and to do it.

In this district, as in many others, the people are not very careful in their re-payment of debts, and shopkeepers do not now give credit to the same extent as formerly. As to rent and cess, to the payment of these, too, a strong aversion is often manifested.

Many of their habits are not over cleanly, though this is largely due to the wretched nature of their houses, and a strict regard for truth is not a prominent part of their character.

¹ "Sketches in Erris and Tyrawley."

² The total number of cases which occurred between the years 1884 and 1893 was 18.

241 The manures used are mainly sea-weed and farmyard manure. In the mountains the practice of burning the land is common.

231 The pasture is fairly good, but the cattle and sheep are inferior, though efforts are now being made to improve the breeds.

An average family has a couple of pigs, a cow or two and some sheep, a large number of fowl, geese and ducks, and a donkey or horse.

372 The fuel used is turf obtained from the bogs, which are extensive, except in the southern part of the Mullet; and the islands which have now no turf of their own import from Achill or Ballycrov.

381 A very considerable quantity of kelp is made, on which, in the Mullet, a royalty is charged by the landlord. About Portacloy there is no royalty paid.

226 Fishing employs many of the men, though until lately the fish taken was merely for home use. The kinds usually caught are turbot, mackerel, ling, cod, and herrings; all of these, except the turbot, are now cured at the fishing stations established at several parts of the coast by the government. For home consumption, much is eaten fresh, but a good deal of it is roughly salted for winter use.

[251] Lobsters are mostly taken by the men of Inishkea, and by a couple of boats at Portacloy. The Inishkea men, while at this fishing, mostly live in very primitive huts on Inisglora, where they stay away from their families for six weeks or two months at a time.

[435] The lobsters are sold in Belmullet for about five shillings per dozen, and are sent by car to Ballina and thence to England. The lobster pots are mostly of home manufacture.

The fishery stations mentioned above now afford employment to many who formerly had no means of disposing of their surplus time and fish.

439 Large quantities of eggs are exported from this district, Belmullet being the largest egg exporting centre in Ireland. They are brought into the town by the country people and sold to dealers, who, when they have collected a sufficient quantity, send them on to Ballina, whence they are sent to England. Butter is also exported in the summer and autumn.

[234] Illicit distilling is carried on to some extent in this district, though not at all so prevalent as formerly. The stills are made in the people's homes by travelling tinkers who live with the family until the job is finished.

286 A good deal of homespun is made, but the dyes are not obtained

BROWNE—*Ethnography of the Mullet, Inishkea, & Portacloy.* 625

Dinner.—Tea and soda-bread, or fish and potatoes.

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Supper.—Fish and potatoes, with buttermilk as a beverage, or stirabout and milk. 264

In the mountainous parts, potatoes and stirabout form, with tea and boxty, the larger part of the dietary. In this region also the poorer families do not usually take more than two meals a day during the winter months.

Butter, cheese, and eggs are but very little used, the eggs being exported, and in some remote parts sometimes bartered to the small dealers for tea, sugar, or tobacco, instead of being sold for money. [439]

In many parts a good deal of poteen is consumed, as illicit distilling, though much less common than formerly, still prevails to a considerable extent. [437] 273

4. *Clothing.*—When seen in their holiday dress the people appear to be well dressed, and almost over-clothed; but the everyday working-dress is, among the poorer part of the population, often of a very non-descript, not to say ragged, character. 291

At first sight there does not seem to be much homespun worn, but on closer inspection a great deal of it appears to be still in use, but to be made up in modern style. It is usually dyed blue, but a good deal of it is a natural grey made by mixing black and white wool, and which, as it does not fade, is much in use. The costume of the men varies much; the old swallow-tailed coat with the metal buttons is now seldom seen, being replaced by more modern patterns. The trousers are either homespun or corduroy. Hats and caps of all shapes are worn; they are usually purchased in Belmullet from local shopkeepers who import them. Many of the men, on working days, wear shirts of a thick, white, homespun flannel. [439] [444]

The men of Inishkea still retain a distinctive attire, their dress being composed of a navy-blue homespun, of which shirt, vest, and trousers are made; many wear a loose blouse or frock of the same material, which they prefer to "shop cloth," as they say it is warmer, wears longer, and stands sea water better; it is certainly more picturesque.

A great deal of second hand clothing is sold on fair days to the poorer class of people by "Cheap Jacks," who dispose of their wares by a sort of Dutch auction. [443]

The men wear boots in every-day dress, but the women and children do so only on Sundays, market-days, and holidays. It is a common custom for women going to market in Belmullet to walk barefooted, carrying their boots in their baskets until they reach the outskirts of

178 grinding barley for cattle food, or in some few cases for malt for
[412] poteen.

[415] Hooped piggins are used in many houses, as also are sheepskin
sieves (*borans*).

178 The spinning-wheel for wool is of the usual Connaught type, with-
283 out treadle, and is made in the district. The cards used for the wool
are imported, being all made in Dublin. The hand-loom is the same
as used elsewhere in the West, and of rather rude construction, though
capable of turning out good work.

287 A machine of rather primitive design is used for compressing cloth.
It was made by its user, and has been working for many years.

373 Rush-lights are used in some houses, and in others the rude lamp
already referred to, which is evidently merely a reproduction in tin-
ware of the old stone or iron lamp for fish oil.

● 273 The stills employed by the makers of poteen are constructed of tin,
and of simple but effective design. They are made in the owners
houses by tinkers.

501 The curragh, of the usual form, is the boat most in use, and seems
likely to hold its own. It is now covered with tarred canvas, but
seventy years ago horse-skins were used for this purpose. A large
stone is often used as an anchor for small boats.

172 2. *Antiquities* may be divided into two classes—(a) Architectural
remains, and (b) Articles of use or ornament. (a) Architectural
remains are still very numerous, though many of the most interesting
have altogether disappeared; of these the most noticeable was the
Oileach, the fortified seat of the chiefs of Hy-Fiachrach, which was
situated at Elly in the Mullet, on or near the position of Bingham's
Castle. Several castles belonging to the Barrets and Burkes have
also been entirely destroyed.

Some of the ruins still remaining are of pagan origin, others are
ecclesiastical structures. The principal pagan antiquities are the
duns or forts, both stone and earthen, the monuments, &c. There
are several duns, both within the district actually treated of in this
Paper, and along the coast line of the surrounding country; those
within the Mullet are *Dunnamos*, a stone fort of large size, built
on a rocky promontory overhanging the sea, and formerly one of the
most perfect on this coast; of late years, however, it has suffered
severely, the greater part of the wall has been broken down to afford
building material for houses and walls about Belmullet; the guard-
chambers mentioned by O'Donovan and others are now almost
destroyed, the outworks thrown down. One part of the wall alone

657 erality. Houses, farms more than twice the size of those normal before the days of the Congested Districts Board, doles to those needing them from November to April, subsidized schemes of building walls that seem in places scarcely necessary, and no direct taxation—all contribute to the general social welfare. In addition the family allowances and old age pensions help in many households, but these are general state benefits. During the winter many householders are short of money, once the money for the stock has been spent.²⁰

167 Second, emigration has been of vast
434 benefit to the community; money comes in to most of the homes from America²¹ or Britain, or both. And emigration has made possible the making of farms which, with the use of commonage, can hardly support a family in comfort but can give basic sustenance; though, as more and more farms are united, some men will prosper, especially those who fish as well as farm.

443 Third, it is regrettable that the lack
489 of commercial facilities means that eggs, poultry, butter, and other produce cannot be sold; in many parts of Ireland the sale of eggs to grocers and milk to

● [273] ²⁰ The consumption of stout at the only inn averages eight barrels a week in summer, but only three barrels a week in winter. The standard content of a barrel is 256 pints.

[804] ²¹ Many of the children are dressed in American clothes.
[291]

[p. 209(A)]

KILNS AND CLOCHAUNS

from 'the troubles' of the early nineteen-twenties. Souterrains³⁴³ have also been used for other illegal activities which were enjoyed irrespective of political party, such as the making of illicit whiskey—poteen—an activity which is not yet entirely suppressed and which called for secrecy. I have more than once^[273] been shown specially-made underground hiding-holes where the^[674] poteen-makers went to earth when the gaugers were scented.

In the category of temporary shelters we place the wretched 'fever-huts' erected to isolate victims of infectious diseases in the famine years. We cannot wonder that no detailed descriptions are to be found, but the account of a structure of 'turf built up in the form of a cone, with an entrance scarcely large enough for a dog to crawl through'¹ hints that some of these huts presented features of interest to the ethnographer. Temporary windbreaks erected by turf-cutters are also of considerable interest. One which I saw in Co. Fermanagh (Fig. 38)

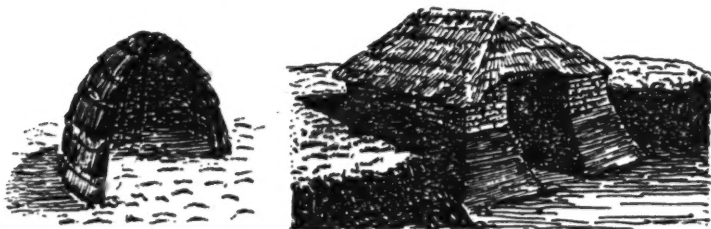


FIG. 38. Bog shelters, Co. Fermanagh. Left, for turf-cutters; right, partly dug out of the bog, for calves.

was built of birch rods bent over and neatly thatched with branches and rushes. The construction of animal shelters in great variety, too, built of sods or wattles, doubtless perpetuates skills once devoted to human habitations. I illustrate in Fig. 39 an outhouse with a solid hipped roof, known as a flat roof.

Unusual, because so far as I know confined to Achill Island, are little soot-houses erected for the special purpose of manufacturing supplies of soot and ashes as fertilizers. It is probable that we have to deal with a custom which has died out elsewhere and has maintained itself here in insular isolation. It will

¹The Saxon in Ireland (1851), 143.

HOME-MADE THINGS

463 survivors of these wandering folk are the tinkers, sworn enemies
326 of the farmers but useful in many ways to the farmers' wives.
Though miscalled gypsies they are of native Irish stock and
have little, if any, Romany blood. Numbering between 5,000 and
6,000 but declining, they now find little scope for their tradi-
tional skill as white smiths but subsist mainly on collecting
scrap metal and dealing in horses. Down to recent times their
services were in demand for making and repairing the stills
in which home-made whiskey (poteen) was manufactured.
[273] Weavers and tailors as well as tinkers were despised by farming
[554] folk as 'travellers', whereas the smith was held in high esteem.

Most of the home industries depended on wood and other
463 plant products, natural or cultivated, and on the skin and hair of
178 animals. Nearly all these crafts are now dead or dying and their
products, perishable by nature, are either gone or fast disap-
pearing. A few skills live on, others survive in children's pas-
s-times or in the memories of old people. The unwritten lore of
[824] the countryside included a vast store of information on all the
[925] varied trees, plants and animals, birds and fishes which in times
past played their part in the lives of the people. Nearly every
[861] species had its practical, medicinal or magical uses, and through
careful observation, empirical knowledge and a wealth of
poetic fancy, a vivid interest in the world of nature was main-
tained and passed on from one generation to another. Much
of this lore has been lost with the decline of the Gaelic tongue
and the spread of formal education and book-learning. The
[871] country school must conform to a clerk-breeding curriculum
designed to meet urban demands. The destruction of woodland
and the debasement of standards of living which followed the
adoption of the alien potato and the consequent famines had
serious consequences on home crafts. Then mass-produced
goods came to drive out many products which depended on a
discriminating knowledge of local materials. Thus barbed wire
has taken the place of its rustic prototype—a hay-rope strung
with thorns—and binder-twine has killed a dozen varieties of
home-made ropes and thongs. The economist might think of
them as bonds tethering rural communities to the soil, but to
the sociologist they imply spiritual as well as physical links
with mother earth.

WEDDINGS AND WAKES

at that time and that the ceremony presumably took place in the priest's house.) 585

'Whichever of the new married couple first rises after the nuptial benediction, will, it is considered, live longest . . . ; after this scene is over they again adjourn to the public house . . . , after which the company again mount their horses, the bride being then changed behind the bridegroom's man, and scamper away towards the bride's house, whilst numbers of people are collected on the hills and eminences to behold the race for the bottle. The winning of the bottle is frequently contended for between the bridegroom's and the bride's parties; the first person that arrives at the bride's house is victorious. The victor then receives the bottle and again returns to the main body of the wedding, where he hands it to the bridegroom, who first drinks of it and hands it to his bride, who also partakes, it then goes the round until nearly finished, when . . . the bridegroom flings it with the remaining contents away. On their arrival at the bride's house a cake of oatmeal or flour, which is called the bride's cake is broken over the bride's head, and is greedily seized upon by young people of both sexes for the purpose of placing a portion of it under their pillow, in order that they may dream of their future partners in life. Another scene of noisy festivity and drunkenness then commences, which often terminates in riot and bloodshed between the different parties; there being frequently a kind of rivalry between them in supporting the dignity of the bridegroom and bride, particularly if they do not happen to be of one line of ancestors.'¹ [273] ● [787]

No doubt where land and livestock were involved such marriages were not so uninhibited as it might appear. Physical attraction was not a prime consideration. The normal course was for a peasant to marry a girl whose capabilities were known or could be fairly judged, preferably 'a far-out friend', who lived close enough for family visits and exchanges of labour to be made. We know from other accounts of marriage customs in the early nineteenth century that the order of events as described above was sometimes reversed: 'The marriage is agreed upon by bargain, and the theft or abduction follows as a concerted 581 583

¹J. Donaldson, *Upper Frus*, 64-66.

WEDDINGS AND WAKES

585 The good luck of the bottle race referred to above may be
 [777] associated with the 'agreement bottle' of whiskey which was
 [273] drunk, according to a seventeenth-century account, when the
 parents and relations of the young couple had reached a
 marriage agreement.¹ To this day in parts of Co. Down
 'running for the broth' is a feature of country marriages, a bowl
 of broth being the reward given to the person who reaches the
 bride's house first after the wedding. Until recently, also, the
 young couple were expected to appear at the Bride's Show on
 the first Sunday after their marriage: they were accompanied
 to a special sloping field where they ran hand-in-hand to a
 stone near the bottom of the field, followed by pairs of linked
 boys and girls, each boy kissing the stone. Games and what
 was described to us as 'general carrying on' followed the
 Bride's Show.²

584 In more remote parts of the country match-making is still
 a recognized procedure. The professional match-maker is a
 well-known figure, usually a shrewd elderly person well versed
 in the arts of rural diplomacy, and his role has been fully de-
 scribed by Arensberg. He acts for the farmer who is ready for
 his son to marry—the son being often well into middle age—
 by negotiating with the parents of the girl whom the farmer has
 selected. In the prolonged bargaining as to the amount of the
 'fortune' which the girl is to bring with her the values of peasant
 living stand clearly revealed.³ Marriage is not so much a per-
 sonal relationship as a union between groups, reinforcing
 relations which extend far beyond individuals.

There was a popular belief that the curse of sterility could be
 placed on the bride by any ill-disposed person who tied knots
 in a string during the marriage ceremony. A more obvious
 example of magic was the custom of tying a hen which was
 about to lay an egg to the bed-post on the marriage night.
 [585] There are widespread traditions of the days when landlords
 exercised the *jus primae noctis* over their tenants' wives, and
 one hears of leases which contained clauses governing the right.
 844 During pregnancy it was lucky to do certain things and to avoid

¹Sir Henry Piers, *West-Meath*, 1, 122.

²E. E. Evans, *Mourne Country*, 193

³C. M. Arensberg, *The Irish Countryman*, ch. 3.

42 • THE LAND AND THE SEA

with him while fishing or be brought his dinner and afternoon lunch in the field. Infants and young children are fed milk at various times, and the youth often eat biscuits, candy, or bread spread with sugar between the five regular meals.

Most women bake their own bread in "pot ovens" suspended over the open fire, with ingredients purchased in the shops, but some buy bakery bread which is delivered from the mainland once a week. Women with many offspring must bake bread daily, since as many as five loaves will be eaten in a day by a family of eight. Cream is saved from the milk and turned into butter in locally made churns every few days, to provide the pound or more of butter consumed in a week by each member of the family. A few women purchase shop butter and also margarine for cooking, but the latter is not used on the table (despite the fact that it is one-third the price of imported butter), because it is an artificial product and thus thought to lack food value. Both chicken and duck eggs are eaten, and some persons prefer hard to soft boiled eggs. Men insist on drinking their tea from large mugs and prefer their bread sliced thick and spread generously with butter. Telling of a tea that he attended in Dublin, a man complained of teacups the size of egg cups and bread cut so thin that "you could see houses on the mainland through it." Children are more prone than adults to use jam on their bread, and a large jar of imported jam will last but a day in a household containing six children.

Few families can afford to serve meat daily, and sometimes several days will pass before meat appears on the table. Among the meats eaten are lamb, mutton, chicken, and fish procured locally, and rasher and sausage bought in the shops; however, some families have beef and lamb shipped directly to them from mainland shops weekly. Meats usually are boiled, even fish, and soup and gravy are made from the liquids formed. Although lobsters, crabs, snails, and other shelled sea creatures are obtained by the folk, they are exported, used for bait, or cast aside rather than eaten. Two kinds of seaweed are included in the diet and are considered delicacies: *creannach*, which can be consumed raw as it is pulled but more commonly is boiled and dried before being eaten, and *carraigín*, which when cooked with milk makes a tasty blancmange. These seaweeds are believed to promote health and are used as folk medicines by some islanders, who regard them as having a magical potency.

The potatoes grown in Inis Beag are considered outstanding in taste, even when compared with those grown on the mainland. They are boiled in a "cooking pot" over the open hearth; this container is deeper and has a rounder bottom than its pot oven counterpart. At one time, it was customary to drain potatoes and eat them from a round, flat, short-sided basket woven from sally rods, called a *ciseog*. They still are drained with the basket in many households, but I have observed only three families eating communally from a *ciseog* atop the table. This is thought to be a "backward" custom, and a film producer earned the wrath of the folk by portraying this trait in his work; actually, it did not appear in the film, nor did other sequences, such as a woman suckling a pig in time of drought, which the islanders claim that the producer included to brand them "savages." Potatoes when eaten are "stabbed" with a fork, peeled with a knife, and eaten with the

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passersby, and live more frugally and save more as a result. Gruff, impatient, and often impolite, they talk rapidly in high pitched voices and shout at their beasts and at one another from a distance, and on occasion they will use profanity. Inis Thiar men drink more than Inis Beag men, it is claimed; rather than sipping slowly and savoring their stout and whiskey, they consume it quickly and are more concerned with the effects that it produces. It is admitted in Inis Beag that all Irish are inquisitive and disposed to gossip about their fellows, but islanders to the west are openly so and will "demand" information from tourists and will discuss one another quite freely. Braver, "bolder," and less concerned with morality, men from Inis Thiar rowed to the freighter on several occasions and contested successfully with local folk for salvage, which caused some Inis Beag wives to deride their husbands for not possessing these qualities. Women of Inis Thiar also are thought to be braver and bolder, and remain less in their homes, visit relatives and acquaintances and the shops more often, and in general participate more in social events than do their sisters to the east. Despite being extremely critical of Inis Thiar folk for possessing the above and many other less prominent traits, the people of Inis Beag grudgingly admit that their neighbors possess greater *esprit de corps* and enjoy life more than themselves. Once a person emigrates from Inis Beag, he or she seldom returns; but Inis Thiar emigrants are "clever" and do well abroad, and often return with earnings to remain at home, especially women who come back with "fortunes" to seek husbands.

The attitudes of islanders toward those living on the mainland—"townspeople" or "city folk"—reveal a primitivistic bias which probably can be traced back to the Viking occupation, when towns first were established in Ireland and primitive Celts became transformed into peasants: "that primitive people retain a morality which civilized people tend to lose; that a man's moral worth declines in rough proportion to his distance from the soil; that civilization must be held accountable for man's noteworthy catalogue of vices;" (Ardrey 1961:147-148). Inis Beag folk regard themselves as impeccably moral and mainlanders, although fellow Catholics, as immoral; yet the "progressiveness" of the latter is envied secretly and gives rise to the sensitivity of islanders to the real and imagined denigration of them by mainlanders for their backwardness. Mainland Irish are thought to be overly pecuniary, dishonest, rude, and promiscuous. When visiting towns and cities on the mainland, Inis Beag people for many years have worn mainland attire so as not to be singled out and ridiculed. They are ashamed of their English speech—even though adults speak the tongue with greater proficiency than many urban dwellers—and believe that they are prey to dishonest shopkeepers, who are ever ready to take advantage of their ignorance and naiveté. Whenever my wife and I paid short visits to a nearby port or to Dublin, we were requested by islanders to make purchases, have repairs made under our name, and transact other business for them because we were "too clever to be cheated." Once in the city, the folk miss Inis Beag with its clear air and broad expanses, and they complain of the tall buildings (seldom more than four stories high) which "press in" on them, the bustle of the main street, the curious stares of townspeople, and the dirtiness of buildings and roads. In claiming that few islanders would prefer to live there

70 • THE VILLAGE AND THE FAMILY

Numerous factors are weighed by the representatives of the future spouses before a match is consummated. Uppermost in the minds of the relatives of the man is the size of the dowry that the woman will bring to the marriage. In the decade 1951 to 1960, the average dowry was 50 to 60 pounds, but at least one reached 100 pounds. This sum now is used to finance the wedding party, but once it went to provide the passage and "settling in" money for an emigrating sibling, to furnish the dowry for a daughter, or to make life more comfortable for the aging parents. Land and capital (and other status attributes soon to be discussed) possessed by the father or widowed mother of the man are the focal concern of the woman's relatives during matchmaking. Among the factors which enter into the deliberations of both bargaining parties are: the presence in either family line of mental illness or other afflictions which can stigmatize, the economic skills and industriousness of the potential spouses, the number of cognates (relatives on all sides of ego limited only by degree of kinship) which compose the two kin-groups and their propensity to assist and defend (and not to engage in disputes), and the mutual attraction of body and personality of the future spouses. The folk believe that young persons approaching marriage "should have known each other for a long spell" and that "the two should be alike"—as to family position, education, and temperament. It is common for a woman to choose not to marry a man to whom she may be attracted because his mother is overly jealous and domineering, or these are "too many old people in the house."

Most weddings take place on Tuesday during the hour before noon, at the direction of the curate, but at one time they were conducted between four and five o'clock in the afternoon, so that the guests could hurry back to the groom's house "to make a night of it;" the morning ceremony means that festivities commence in mid-afternoon and the party often is "stale by nightfall." Each family invites its circle of relatives and friends who congregate at the respective domiciles in the morning, where the men are served whiskey. The groom's entourage then accompanies him to the house of the bride, and another "round" is proffered them before the procession is formed for the journey to the chapel and back. Three men lead the column at some distance from the bride and groom, to ward off those with the evil eye or any other malignant forces which might threaten the couple. Close behind the bride and groom are the "best man" and "maid of honor," followed in order by the two fathers, male guests in a group, and at the end female guests; the two mothers do not attend the wedding, nor does the bride's mother participate in the matchmaking or allow her daughter to return home until a month following the nuptials (Formerly, she did not enter her daughter's house until a grandchild was born.).

Grooms long have worn mainland attire for the ceremony, but only in 1960 did the first bride do so. Before then, the woman wore a new blue petticoat, accouterments purchased in shops at a nearby mainland port, and a shawl for the first time, draped over the shoulders. Her hair had remained uncut until this day, and she and the groom wore borrowed items of clothing—she usually the shawl and he a coat or tie—to bring luck to their marriage. During the nuptial service, the man not only places a ring on the finger of his bride, but gives her seven shillings with which to buy later a holy picture, or some other object of her

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775 there's going to be a life hereafter," someone shouted out from the audience, "There won't be.", and the others laughed so uproariously and for so long a time that she had to discontinue singing.

775 Only Catholics can enter Heaven, so most islanders claim, and among the faithful only saints go directly to Heaven at death, as preordained by God. All others who escape Hell must sojourn in Purgatory, where the temporal punishment of sins previously forgiven must be endured, and the guilt of unrepented venial sins cleared away. Conceptions of Purgatory are vague, but it is felt that severe punishments are meted out there, and that the stay of most Catholics is a long one, even though mitigated by earthly indulgences and penances. Theirs is an example of what some theologians term a "dreary interpretation of Purgatory," with its emphasis on the sinful nature of man. Several times we were told that we would enter Heaven even though not Catholic, because "religions are like canoes which set out on separate courses for a mainland port, yet all reach their destination;" always we were cautioned not to disclose this personal belief to the curate.

796 The most significant religious events of the year in Inis Beag are certain Catholic feast days, masses performed in homes twice each year, marriages, funerals, visits to the holy well, and several pagan observances. Of the many feast days commemorating the mysteries of the faith and honoring particular saints, eight are holydays of obligation in Ireland: Circumcision, St. Patrick, Ascension, Corpus Christi, Assumption, All Saints, Immaculate Conception, and Nativity. On these days the folk attend mass, abstain from work, and do not conduct business. The feasts of St. Patrick and Christmas among these, and the lesser feasts of St. Brigid, Easter, the patron saint of Inis Beag, St. John, All Souls, St. Martin, and St. Stephen, are considered the most important locally. Although pagan elements are incorporated to some extent in all feast days, reinterpretations are most in evidence in the feasts of St. Brigid, St. John, St. Martin, and St. Stephen, and thus they will be taken up later in the chapter.

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[262] Lent in Inis Beag is a period during which men are hard at work farming, and social activities are at low ebb. The laws of fast and abstinence during Lent impose no hardships on the folk in light of the simplicity of their diet, with meat often absent from the table and only one full meal taken during the day as a matter of course. The standard of living in the island is such that for most people there is "too little to give up anything." Many islanders abstain from drinking alcoholic beverages during Lent, and will imbibe only on St. Patrick's Day, March 17th. Following the shipwreck (six days after Ash Wednesday in 1960), when salvaged Scotch whiskey was present in vast quantities, several men who had "sworn off" spirits took to drinking Vat 69 in the privacy of their homes; when the practice became known publicly, they claimed that they were "off the stout" only,

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[527] which is what most men drink ordinarily because of the high cost of liquor. St. Patrick's Day is much anticipated because it is a holyday of obligation when work ceases, drink can be taken by abstainers, and there is a dance in the boat house in the evening. The dance did not materialize in 1960, because the time of flood tide, when the grounded freighter could best be boarded, coincided with the time of the dance. Before mass on St. Patrick's Day, boys in groups search for shamrocks, which, if found, will ensure the finder "riches" in the future. Women that day wear

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green sweaters, men shamrocks in their buttonholes, and girls green hair ribbons, and there is much visiting in the afternoon following a special meal. Women spend the last weeks of Lent preparing new clothes for their spouses, their children, and themselves, which first are worn to mass on Easter. Eggs are accumulated before the feast day so that each member of the family will have several to eat at breakfast before mass, and in some homes the children gather and hide eggs the week before Easter to see who can collect the most by Sunday morning.

June 14th in Inis Beag is "pattern day," derived from the word patron, which honors the patron saint. Until the 1920s, when suppressed by the clergy, this day and the two days following it rivaled the 12 days of Christmas in festivity. Then it was customary for people from nearby islands and the mainland to visit Inis Beag, and the local folk in turn to attend pattern days in islands and communities in their vicinity. The celebration commenced with the digging out of sand from the church of the patron saint and from his tomb, or "bed," so that during the night of vigil islanders and visitors could pray while walking around the grave and rest in the church to gain special favor from the saint and from God. The day itself saw masses celebrated in the chapel, and athletic, dancing, and other competitions staged on the strand and contiguous common land. Tents were erected to accommodate vendors of food and drink, as well as solo and figure dancers who performed to the tunes played by visiting musicians of note. Most visitors departed at the end of the day, but those who remained were invited to take part in two more days of revelry in certain island homes, where dancing, singing, and drinking prevailed day and night. It was the prevalence of factional fighting and promiscuous behavior engendered by drunkenness which prompted the church to restrict the traditional practices of pattern day.

In the 1930s, the priest inaugurated a custom of celebrating mass on pattern day in the church of the patron saint; but it persisted for only two decades, and today the bed is cleared of sand but the church is not. My wife and I observed only 11 persons praying and resting during the night of vigil in 1960. Miraculous cures, appropriately embodied in legends and anecdotes, are claimed for persons who have propitiated the patron saint in this manner in the past, and most of those who still observe the vigil are seeking relief for physical ills. The most recent cures reported are for spinal meningitis, rheumatism, a deformed knee, and an eyeball pierced with a thorn. No work is done on pattern day now, and a dance in the evening, seldom attended by visitors other than tourists, is the only vestige of the gayety which once marked the day. This dance, just as the St. Patrick's Day dance, did not take place in 1960, even though an accordianist and two other mainlanders came out by *curach* to attend it; the shyness of local girls rather than the tide was the disruptive factor on this occasion.

All Saints is a holyday of obligation November 1st, and is followed next day by another feast—All Souls. One of the most popular of humorous anecdotes deals with All Saints' Day in a neighboring island, where once long ago the Church of Ireland pastor gave the day off to men working for him; when ten days later they asked to be off once again for St. Martin's Day, he inquired with seeming pique, "And where was Martin on All Saints' Day?" The feast of All Souls is also a workless day in Inis Beag, although the cemetery is given its one cleaning of the

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characterized by storytelling, games of various sorts, contests of strength, taunting and mocking, mischief-making, and factional fighting (O Suilleabhain 1967: 26-129). It is hard to imagine a wake more somber than that which takes place in Inis Beag. Most of those who attend it do so before midnight and stay two to three hours, coming and going at will, while "only those who own him stay all night." Each visitor on arrival prays briefly at the bedside of the deceased or in the doorway of the room before expressing condolences, and at midnight all who are anywhere in the wake-house kneel and recite the responses of the Rosary intoned by the curate. Immediate kin express their grief in muffled sobs beside the corpse, but the ancient wailing lament for the dead, known as the "keen," no longer is heard in Inis Beag. Tables and benches are set up in the kitchen on which the men sit silently or converse in whispers with their neighbors, as they drink stout or whiskey and pass around clay pipes offered them "to keep the night awake." Most of the women congregate in the room of the dead, where only very old women smoke pipes. I have counted as many as 18 minutes of absolute silence at a wake and have never heard laughter.

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Before the procession to the church forms, men tend to gather in small groups outside the house of the deceased and women gather inside the house. After the corpse is placed in the coffin, close relatives and even friends shake the hand and kiss the face of the dead person before the top is nailed down; then the box is carried to the front street and placed across two chairs for prayers to be said and holy water sprinkled over it by the priest. A white sheet is draped on the casket, and six pallbearers shoulder it and carry it through a gap made in the stone fence to the road which leads to the chapel. The pallbearers are both agnatic and uterine kin of the deceased, excluding his sons, and two of them have the further duty of digging the shallow grave that night or in the morning before the body is interred. Moving slowly behind the coffin bearers, the procession is headed by the spouse and sons of the dead person, followed by his daughters, then women, and finally men in a long, slow moving, silent column; children other than the offspring of the deceased seldom join the procession, and the sexes walk separately.

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The curate may or may not lead this procession and the one the next morning, sometimes preferring to go ahead to church and cemetery by himself. A son of the dead person treats the grave diggers to stout in a pub before they set out with spades for the graveyard, as he does the pallbearers after they return from the church. In the past, the grave was dug as part of the funeral service, but this custom was altered as the cemetery became filled and occasionally diggers by accident broke into previously interred coffins revealing their contents. A number of grisly legends and anecdotes tell of islanders buried alive by mistake, or whose bodies were partially preserved, as revealed by such accidents.

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The procession from the chapel to the graveyard leaves the modern road, as we saw in Chapter 1, to follow an ancient, obliterated trail past a church believed to have been buried beneath the sand centuries ago, and then climbs the long hill of kitchen midden and sand to the gate of the cemetery. Here the column breaks up, some people going to the graves of relatives to pray and others to the newly opened grave. Men and women kneel separately at the graveside for the service (see Fig. 11), and many of the women cry as the casket is lowered into the shallow

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population in the presence of strangers, to conform to the nativistic and primitivistic stereotype. Probably the most robust of the two dozen islanders past the age of 70 years believes that he will live to be 100 years old, because he continues to be active physically and doesn't "worry about the health;" he accuses his fellows of "worrying themselves into the grave" over matters of body and soul.

The etiology of mental illness as conceived by the islanders is varied and embraces both natural and spiritual realms. "Insanity" stigmatizes the victim and his family, often for many generations, no matter what its cause, and as many psychotics are treated at home—hidden from the probing eyes of strangers—as are incarcerated in the mental institution serving the region of which Inis Beag is a part. Statistics on mental disorders are hard to come by because of the opprobrium attached to insanity, but at least eight of the folk were institutionalized for various periods between 1940 and 1965. Only one of these is a woman and none were violent prior to admission. Inheritance, inbreeding, and the menopause are the natural causes most widely accepted by the islanders, but some claim that heavy blows to the head, acute alcoholism, and even prolonged emotional tension—or "nerves"—can induce insanity. In explaining why a former Inis Beag curate was committed to a mental institution, an old man revealed what is probably the most significant cause of mental illness in Ireland when he said that the constant association of the priest with a pretty housekeeper "drove him mad from frustration;" he advocated that only elderly, plain-appearing women (who will not "gab" everything that they know to "our man") be hired for the task.

Supernatural forces are believed capable of causing not only mental illness, but most other maladies and injuries as well. Pagan dispensers of ill health are vengeful or capricious fairies, ghosts, and witches of the evil eye, while Catholicism provides an unpredictable Devil, a deity who punishes sinful thoughts and deeds in this world as well as in the next, and priests who in Inis Beag often have interpreted the boundaries of sin according to Irish and personal criteria. In the case of certain folk stricken with mental disorders, I have heard specific causes put forth to account for their condition: parents who are second cousins, the evil eye of a neighbor, punishment by God for a particular misdeed, and a priest's curse. A man who mistreated his aged bachelor uncle before his recent death now is haunted with the specter of being struck down from the grave with sickness, injury, or madness by the shade of the uncle seeking revenge. His despair and erratic behavior arouse little sympathy from his fellows, who await the day of reckoning. The stigma of mental illness arises from its designation as inheritable or a sign of the deity's displeasure, both of which may doom those of generations to come. There is a strong suspicion among the folk that other maladies which are deforming or leave physical aftereffects once cured can be transmitted through inheritance. In this category are two mongoloids, one dwarf, one epileptic, one person with goiter, one with a cleft palate, and one who has recovered from poliomyelitis. These disabilities also can stigmatize a family.

Probably the most infamous custom associated with the Irish is their excessive intake of intoxicating drink, and certainly Inis Beag islanders are no exception to the stereotype. Men drink far more than women, but even though the latter widely condemn the practice many are known to send their children to the pubs

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- 273 to procure stout and brandy (ostensibly a general purpose medicine in this case)
[562] in disguised containers to be consumed at home. The drinking of the men takes
273 place, for the most part, in the pubs and at parties, and seldom is it indulged in to
275 the extent that the imbibers become physically incapacitated. There were no cases
[133] of alcoholism in Inis Beag during 1959, according to the nurse. Although drinking
[164] obviously is done to combat depression and boredom, dissolve feelings of shyness
and inferiority, alleviate the sense of sin and guilt, and overcome secretiveness
which limits extroversion, the folk defend the practice by claiming that it makes
them more articulate and convivial and thus better able to sing, dance, converse
with one another, and tell stories. The often used phrases "to give us courage" and
273 "great gas" connote just these benefits. In Ireland today, there are nearly half-a-
575 million members of the Pioneer Total Abstinence Society—founded in that country
125 years ago—who have "taken the pledge" not to drink spirits in any form; they
wear a small badge shaped like a shield which bears the emblem of the Sacred Heart.
Twelve "Pioneers" in Inis Beag have taken a lifetime pledge and about 30 others
[561] a two year pledge not to imbibe. Most of these persons are old men, women, and
[626] boys. Young and middle-aged men who are members of the society are the objects
of a good deal of indirect ridicule and direct jesting.

Folklore

- 177 As a result of acculturation, the Inis Beag esthetic tradition today is not
178 nearly so rich as it was two generations ago, nor has it ever been as rich as those
53 found in many other peasant areas of Ireland. The principal esthetic forms are
folklore, music, and dance; lacking are the graphic and plastic arts, and of the
crafts already considered only the-knitting of ganzies, the crocheting of shawls,
and *crios* making transcend sheer utility in their manufacture, according to the
538 evaluation of island artisans. Myths, legends, folktales, and anecdotes among prose
narratives, and song texts and proverbs, are the predominant genres of oral litera-
ture. There is no drama, while poetry, riddles, and jokes seldom are recited.

- 114 "Along the western shores of Ireland and Scotland . . . is preserved the
171 oldest vernacular literature in Europe, north and west of the Alps. Along this
538 tattered cultural frontier . . . [are] the last remnants of the most venerable body of
orally transmitted tradition in western Europe" (Delargy 1957:178). The Inis Beag
share this body of folklore, and storytelling always has loomed large in the
lives of the people. However, it had disappeared formally from the island by the
time that my wife and I came, and we were never able to attend a traditional
storytelling session, but had to reconstruct its institutionalized characteristics by
538 plumbing the memory of one of the two aged narrators still alive. There are two
types of Irish storytellers: the *scéalaí*, who recounts myths and legends of the
mythological, Ulster, Fenian, and historical cycles, as well as ancient folktales; and
the *seanchaí*, "who makes a specialty of local tales, family-sagas, or genealogies,
social-historical tradition, and the like, and can recount many tales of a short
realistic type about fairies, ghosts, and other supernatural beings (Delargy 1945:6).
[562] In Inis Beag, the former type of storyteller was always male and the latter usually

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neophyte had the makings of a *scéalaí* or *seanchaí*. When the young storyteller performed publicly, he had to be certain of himself, for if he paused too often or too long or left out portions of the tale, he was ridiculed by the islanders and not called on again. Stories were repeated frequently and enjoyed equally each time by the listeners if told well; sometimes the audience requested a favorite tale, and particular narrators came to be associated with certain stories and always were asked to relate them. 538
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[868] 538
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Myths, legends, and folktales told by the *scéalaí* and the long established stories of the *seanchaí* never were embellished but told as accurately as possible. If a narrator attempted to alter such a tale, members of the audience would interrupt and correct him. Stories newly acquired by the folk were modified initially by those who introduced them and by subsequent narrators for a spell, but gradually they became standardized until the point was reached when no one telling them could effect further alterations. The fact that storytellers believed their tales added to the joy of hearing them, for the narrators became deeply involved emotionally in the events that they were describing, and their enthusiasm infected their listeners. [177]

The following were the qualities possessed by a skilled storyteller: he told tales often and derived great pleasure from doing so; he had a musical voice when speaking in either Gaelic or English; he spoke slowly and used few bodily movements; he knew when to pause for effect, especially after a notable incident in the story, which allowed the hearers to picture it in their minds and savor it; his pauses seldom exceeded ten seconds, and he did not cough or interject "bedad," "begob," or "musha" while pausing (an indication that he was trying to recall the next portion of the tale); he looked at each member of the audience in turn, and often stared down at the floor or into the fire for a time; and, he smiled but did not laugh after relating an episode which aroused merriment among his listeners.

When a storyteller was called on, he thought for a spell, head in hands, instead of immediately launching into his tale, even though he probably had made a choice long before. He did not need the urging of the audience or the "courage" afforded by whiskey or stout—which singers and dancers do today—in order to perform. Once started, he never rose from the hob in the hearth, and if he gestured too much in attempting to enact the tale he was laughed at. Interruptions other than corrections were not countenanced; no words of encouragement or praise were uttered as in singing and dancing; and no one dared sleep during a session. The late *scéalaí* carried a short sally rod which he used to prod listeners who appeared to be weary. It is alleged that he once tried to gouge the eyes of a nodding youth with his forked fingers, an incident which often is alluded to when his past performances are recollected. [273] •

Contrary to the opinion of nativists, storytellers of the past in Inis Beag were as proficient in English as in Irish, and tales were told in both tongues with equal ease and audience appreciation. The same cannot be said of proverbs, however, for the folk seldom employ them in their English speech. Proverbs figure prominently in the vernacular and are brief and pithy; their adroit use is a mark of erudition and elegance of speech, and they are used in ordinary conversation to 537
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rejuvenate the moribund tradition. However, several men past the age of 40 years still are able to perform jigs, reels, hornpipes, and hop-jigs with dexterity, "when the humor is on them," and are called out at parties and in the pubs; a few women will step dance in their homes or at small social gatherings.

There is considerable evidence to suggest that the rigid body and arms of the step dancer are an early nineteenth century product of Jansenist doctrine in the church, which attempted to desexualize dancing. Most of the movement is below the hips of the dancer, and it is the feet of the performer which are watched intently by the audience, at least openly. Inis Beag men move their upper bodies and arms more than is customary on the mainland, and they are not as graceful as other Irish dancers.

Figure dancing is called "set" dancing in Ireland, and there are many such dances, each of which combines a number of simple and complex figures performed by the couples. There is only one set in Inis Beag; it bears no name and is danced by one or more groups of four couples each. The many figures of the dance are simple, and it takes about 20 minutes to complete. I have heard young dancers complain at the end of a night of the tediousness of the single set, and some of them are learning other Irish figures at language school dances—"The Walls of Limerick" and "The Bridge of Athlone," among others. The most enjoyed movement of the local set is the one at the end in which the man holds his partner closely and twirls her almost violently, sometimes for longer than is prescribed so that the musician must pause or alter his rhythm. With bodily contact between partners otherwise so limited, perhaps this figure allows the expression of repressed sexuality.

Parties

It is appropriate to describe the Inis Beag party and a festive night at the pub in this chapter, because they are esthetic as well as social events, in which are combined storytelling, music, song, and dance. Parties are very much the same, whether held in the winter or the summer or to welcome home a long departed emigrant or to "drag home" a new bride. Only two rooms of the house are utilized—the kitchen and "the room" adjoining it—and benches are placed along the walls to supplement the chairs and bed on which guests will sit. The barrel or two of stout to be served is placed in the back hall off the kitchen, if there is such a hall, or in a back corner of the kitchen, and one man is assigned the task of dispensing the drink and remaining at his post throughout the night. Another man acts as "pouret" and fills a bucket from which he pours the stout into several mugs and glasses which are circulated from man to man. A bottle of whiskey is opened and proffered only to the old men, who often sit in a group beside the fireplace and exchange anecdotes and tales. On a table in "the room" are placed bottles of wine and soft drinks to accommodate the women and non-drinkers among the men before and after refreshments are served. Sometimes an elderly woman will drink surreptitiously of the whiskey or stout, and it is customary for the musicians and those who sing and step dance the most to be awarded extra amounts of stout. Women

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tend to drink very little at parties, in part because of the embarrassment caused them by visiting the outside toilet with men looking on.

The party commences with several sets danced in quick succession. There is room for only one dance group initially because of the small size of the kitchen and the large number of guests filling the house. It is difficult to move about the two rooms with the press of bodies, and the crowd within is matched by the cluster of men around the front door awaiting their turn to dance. Unmarried women tend to sit and stand on one side of the kitchen and men on the other, while married people congregate in the other room. Children in their best dress sit quietly together and watch the festivities tirelessly until the guests depart.

Crowding at the party necessitates that men and women will be pressed together both as dancers and viewers, and that persons will sit on one another's laps, including women on the laps of men occasionally. The islanders strain to display indifference, as they do in watching a full-bodied woman step dance, at least until the intake of alcohol causes a few to betray their emotions.

Usually two or even three accordionists (and the visiting anthropologist with his phonograph) are invited to attend, and they spell one another. After an hour or so of dancing, singers and step dancers perform between the sets while stout is poured; they may be called out by the urging of the guests, or by the host or one of his choosing who acts as a master of ceremonies and directs all of the activities of the party. Stout may be distributed during the sets, but most hosts prefer that it be done during pauses, so that less is spilled by the dancing and milling crowd. The pourer with his bucket follows the movement of the mugs and glasses as they are passed about, and each man on having his container filled drains it quickly and surrenders it to another nearby. Most of the young men visit the pubs before the party and may do so again once or twice before the pubs close.

Midway during the night, the table of "the room" is set, and refreshments are served to all of the guests in shifts. First the women are served, then the children, followed by the young men who do not drink stout, and finally the other men. Both in viewing the proceedings from benches and in eating, the children are separated as to sex. The menu resembles that of the usual Inis Beag meal and includes tea, bread spread with butter and jam, cakes, and sometimes hard candy. Between the many sittings, the dishes and utensils are washed in a bucket and the table reset. Dancing continues in the kitchen during this period, and after everyone is served the table is moved to a corner and a second set is formed. The remainder of the night is spent in dancing, but the pauses which punctuate the sets become longer and the songs and step dances by guests more frequent as dawn approaches.

My wife and I sponsored a Christmas party in 1959 in the home of an islander and invited the entire population of Inis Beag. Two hours after midnight, when I was absent briefly escorting an old man to his cottage, a fight broke out between two family factions which sent all of the guests scurrying home. The following day, everyone whom we met commiserated with us "for the shame of it," and we were told of many other parties in the past which had ended in the same manner, so that we would not think our affair a failure. In recent years, "rowdiness" on the part of youths who have "taken too much" has increased at

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parties, so that many islanders will not give them for fear of possible damage to houses and outbuildings. The reason why one man is assigned to the barrel of stout and a "firm" master of ceremonies is favored is to curb drunkenness and factional fighting. Small parties are coming to replace the large ones of the past, with invitations tendered secretly and at the last moment to avoid attracting "hooligans." The format, however, has remained the same.

Pubs

Both pubs in Inis Beag do a thriving business. There are some folk who purchase all of their provisions, drinks, and tobacco in only one of the pubs, others who buy most of them in one but occasionally do business in the second, and still others who scrupulously balance their buying between the two. The first group is composed of near kin of the publicans, and the second of those who are economically beholden to the king and utilize his pub mostly, or who dislike him and give the lion's share of their business to the other. This pattern is broken only when one of the pubs is out of a commodity which the other has in stock, one of them is closed for whatever reason, a "big night" is taking place at one of them, or a dispute interferes. During the day, provisions are purchased in the shop—by children, women, and sometimes men; the women and children make their visits as brief as possible, but the men are likely to stay for at least one "pint" of stout and a "smoke." Other visitors in the daytime are chronic drinkers, men who are working nearby and use the pub for a break, and men reciprocating for economic services rendered. The pub is the province of the adult males at night, and the only women who enter are the teachers, visiting emigrants, and tourists. Seldom is step dancing done unless outsiders are present, and when women are in the audience they will be called out to form a set or to dance solo or be paired with an islander. Some nights only two or three of the folk will put in an appearance at the pub, but on other nights as many as 20 persons will crowd into the narrow room, while others in the hallway and outside wait to take their turn inside. Another half-dozen men may sit in the snug drinking and talking together privately.

Men come to the pub after dark usually in groups of two, three, or four. Reciprocity dictates the drinking procedure, with each man in a group taking his turn at "standing a round" for as long as the evening lasts. Men who do not like to drink much or have little money will come to the pub singly or with another in like circumstances, so that they will not become victims of the custom of reciprocation. My first experience with this custom—in 1958 in a neighboring island—almost ended in tragedy for me, as I was with six men who insisted on drinking "glasses" of whiskey; only my deep commitment to research and a heavy meal a short time before prevented a "third round knockout." The first hour after the men arrive in the pub is a quiet one, as they sit in silence or whisper to one another while drinking pints in rapid succession. As their shyness gradually is overcome by alcohol, they become more talkative and speak in louder tones to a wider circle of their fellows. At least two hours must pass before individuals have "courage" enough to tell stories to all assembled or to sing. The best singers will be

- 275 The best singers will be
 • 273 called out with shouts of encouragement from the others, and some men need as
 571 many as five minutes of urging before they will perform. In the case of the man
 533 who is particularly reticent about singing, those sitting on either side of him will
 [157] grasp his hands with one of theirs and swing his arms backward and forward until
 [572] he commences to sing in the suggested rhythm of the arm movements. Sometimes
 this continues throughout the song, and later in the evening it is done with other
 singers as the sense of male "camaraderie" grows apace.
- 275 Seldom does fighting break out in the pub, for the publican will not serve
 273 drinks to those whom he feels have taken too much, and he will order everyone
 576 out if there is a threat of violence. Visiting women invariably are treated politely
 834 no matter how boisterous the men become. On a nearby island, my wife and I saw
 [578] a Yank brutally beaten and thrown out of a pub by several men when he spoke "dis-
 [123] respectfully" in Gaelic before us and another visiting women. An elderly widower
 of Inis Beag was much criticized when after dancing with my wife in a pub he
 brushed his cheek against hers briefly in his exuberance; she thought nothing of it,
 but many of the folk apologized to her for his action, and our relationship with the
 man thereafter was strained. Visitors must be careful about how they participate
 275 in the drinking pattern of the pub. If they drink by themselves or only with out-
 273 siders and never buy rounds for the islanders present, they are despised secretly;
 576 but if they stand rounds often with the obvious end in view of earning acceptance,
 609 they are considered "fools." The several folk who will take advantage of a stranger
 275 who is generous with rounds in the pub are subjected to severe censure. Each year,
 273 my wife and I donate a barrel of stout to a pub on St. Patrick's Day to be drunk
 123 by islanders who come that night—to commemorate the shipwreck and rescue
 211 (whose anniversary is nine days before); a verse of my ballad refers to certain folk
 [574] who will not accept drinks unless they can reciprocate—"People will say the
 free stout brought me in."

17: Messenger E-4,5 (1958-1966) 1971 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
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562 recess play and movement to and from school. During church services,
834 there is a further separation of adult men and women, as well as boys
[858] and girls, and each of the four groups leaves the chapel in its turn. The
[864] pubs are frequented only by men or by women tourists and female
teachers who have spent several years on the mainland while training
and thus are "set apart" (and, of course, by inquisitive female ethnogra-
[443] phers). Women occasionally visit the shops to procure groceries, but it is
more common for them to send their children to do so, since supplies and
drinks are proffered across the same counter, and men are usually to be
[484] found on the premises. Even on the strand during summer months, male
[526] tourists tend to bathe at one end and women at the other. Some swimmers
[291] "daringly" change into bathing suits there, under towels and dresses—
[832] a custom practiced elsewhere in Ireland which has overtones of sexual
[184] catharsis.

154 It is often asserted that the major "escape valve" of sexual frustra-
[839] tion among single persons in Ireland is masturbation; frustration-aggres-
[272] sion theorists, however, would stress the ubiquity of drinking, alcoholism,
[733] disputes, and pugnacity as alternative outlets. Pugnacity can also be
[578] linked to the widespread problem of male identity. Our study revealed
that male masturbation in Inis Beag seems to be common, premarital
83 coitus unknown, and marital copulation limited as to foreplay and the
584 manner of consummation. My wife and I never witnessed courting—
"walking out"—in the island. Elders proudly insist that it does not occur,
832 but male youths admit to it in rumor. The claims of young men focus on
"petting" with tourists and a few local girls, whom the "bolder" of them
kiss and fondle outside of their clothing. Island girls, it is held by their
[771] "lovers," do not confess these sins because they fail to experience
[626] pleasure from the contact. The male perpetrators also shun the con-
[783] fessional because of their fear of the priest.

833 We were unable to determine the frequency of marital coitus. A
considerable amount of evidence indicates that privacy in the act is
stressed and that foreplay is limited to kissing and rough fondling of the
lower body, especially the buttocks. Sexual activity invariably is initiated
[291] by the husband. Only the male superior position is employed; intercourse
takes place with underclothes not removed; and orgasm, for the man, is
[12] achieved quickly, almost immediately after which he falls asleep. (I
must stress the provisional nature of these data, for they are based on a
limited sample of respondents and relate to that area of sexual behavior
least freely discussed.)

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Many kinds of behavior disassociated from sex in other societies,

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[759] bathing his chest in the mother's absence. (In this case, Oedipal and
[155] sexual attitudes probably were at work in tandem.)

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It must be pointed out that nudity is also shunned for "health" reasons, for another obtrusive Inis Beag character trait is hypochondria.

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[291] In some cases, however, it is hard to determine whether concern with
[834] modesty or health is dominant in a particular behavioral response. Fear
[753] of colds and influenza is foremost among health concerns; rheumatism and related muscular joint ailments, migraine headaches and other psychosomatic disorders, tooth decay, indigestion ("nervous stomach"), and hypermetropia are other widespread pathologies which cause worry among the folk—not to mention those of supernatural origin.

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[863] Secrecy surrounds the acts of urination and defecation. The evacuation of infants before siblings and strangers is discouraged, and
[325] animals that discharge in the house are driven out. Chickens that habitually "dirty" their nests while setting are soon killed and eaten.

Although some women drink spirits privately, they seldom do so at parties. In part this is because of the embarrassment involved in visiting the outside toilet with men in the "street" looking on. One of the most

carefully guarded secrets of Inis Beag, unreported in the many works describing island culture, is the use of human manure mixed with sand as a fertilizer. We were on the island eight months before we discovered that compost is not "street drippings" and "scraw," but decomposed

feces. With "turf" becoming more difficult to procure from the mainland, some islanders have taken to importing coal and processed peat and burning cattle dung. The dung is prepared for use in difficult-to-reach plots at the back of the island when tourists are few in number; it is

burned covertly because of the overtones of sex and poverty. Another custom that my wife and I learned of late in our research, due to the secrecy surrounding it, concerns the thickening of wool; men are required to urinate in a container and tread the wool therein with their bare feet.

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[462] Other major manifestations of sexual repression in Inis Beag are the lack of a "dirty joke" tradition (at least as the term is understood by ethnologists and folklorists) and the style of dancing, which allows little bodily contact among participants. I have heard men use various verbal devices—innuendoes, puns, and asides—that they believed bore sexual connotations; relatively speaking, they were pallid. In the song that I composed, one line of a verse refers to an island bachelor arising late in the day after "dreaming perhaps of a beautiful mate"; this is

[123]